

[00026] FIG. 6 is a perspective view of the reinforcer dispensing assembly of FIG. 5 showing additional details of the assembly.

[00027] FIG. 7 is an enlarged cross-sectional view of a portion of the automatic reinforcer positioning assembly depicted in FIG. 5.

[00028] FIGS 8A to 8D are side views, at least partly in cross-section, illustrating operation of the automatic reinforcer positioning mechanism depicted in FIG. 5.

[00029] FIG. 9 is a cross-sectional view illustrating the details of an alternative embodiment of the present invention showing reinforcer positioning assembly mounted within a cavity of an applicator arm to facilitate loading and replacement of the reinforcer positioning assembly in the applicator body.

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[00030] FIGS. 10A to ~~10B~~ are side views, partly in cross-section, illustrating an embodiment of the present invention whereby a hole is punched and then reinforced utilizing a combination hole punch and reinforcer applicator.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

[00031] Referring now to the drawings in detail, in which like reference numerals indicate like or corresponding elements among the several figures, there is shown in FIG. 1 a hole reinforcer applicator 10 in accordance with one aspect of the present invention. Applicator 10 has a lower applicator arm 15 pivotally attached to upper applicator arm 20 by hinge assembly 25. Upper applicator arm 20 is biased apart from lower applicator arm 15 by spring member 30. Spring member 30 is an arm of a resilient plastic, which may be the same material as used to form lower and upper applicator arms 15, 20. Spring member 30 is fixed at one end to either lower or upper applicator arms 15, 20, with the other end being free, allowing lower and upper applicator arms to be pulled apart to allow loading of reinforcer dispensing assembly 35 into applicator 10.

[00032] Reinforcer dispensing assembly 35 comprises a shaft 45 upon which are mounted one or more reinforcers 60. Reinforcer dispensing assembly 35 is removably mounted at a location adjacent to the end of upper applicator arm 20 opposite hinge 25. A proximal end 47 of shaft 45 is inserted into a hole (not shown) at the end of applicator arm 20 to removably mount reinforcer